



Overweight and Physical Activity Among Children:

A Portrait of the Nation



Prevalence of Overweight in Children

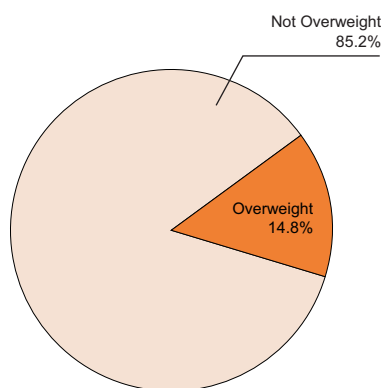
For the survey parents were asked to give the height and weight of their children; these were used to calculate the child's Body Mass Index (BMI). Those children whose BMIs were at or above the 95th percentile for their age were considered to be overweight. Overall, 14.8 percent of children aged 10 to 17 years are classified as overweight.

The proportion of children who are overweight varies by a number of factors, including sex. Based on parent-reported height and weight, 18.1 percent of males are overweight, compared to 11.5 percent of females.

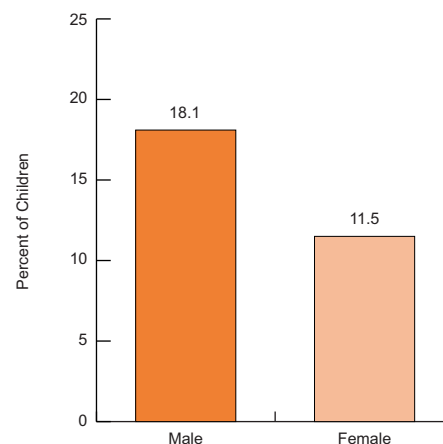
Prevalence of overweight appears to decrease as age increases: children aged 10 to 11 years are most likely to be overweight (21.9 percent), followed by those aged 12 to 14 years (14.4 percent); children aged 15 to 17 years are least likely to be overweight (10.7 percent).

The prevalence of overweight among children also varies by race and ethnicity. Black children are most likely to be overweight (23.5 percent) according to parent-reported height and weight, followed by Hispanic children (18.9 percent); White children are least likely to be overweight (12.0 percent). Multiracial children and children of other races have rates of overweight that are approximately equal (15.3 and 15.2 percent, respectively).

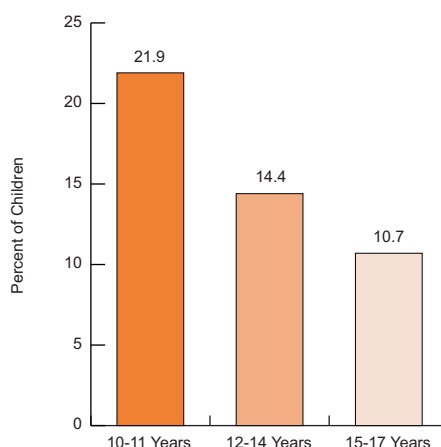
Prevalence of Overweight in Children Aged 10 to 17 Years



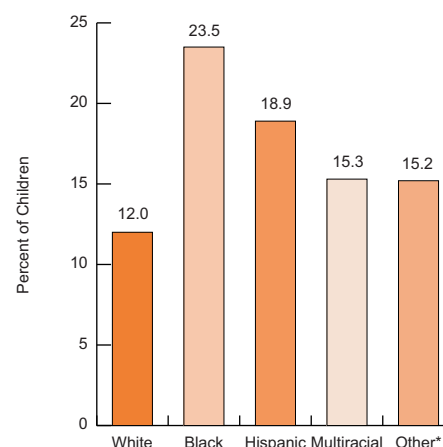
Percent of Children Who Are Overweight, by Sex



Percent of Children Who Are Overweight, by Age



Percent of Children Who Are Overweight, by Race and Ethnicity



*Includes Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native children.

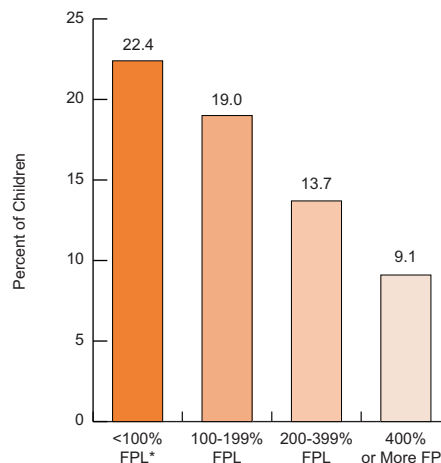




The prevalence of overweight decreases as family income rises. Of children with family incomes below 100 percent of the Federal poverty level (FPL), almost one-quarter (22.4 percent) are overweight, compared to 19.0 percent of children with family incomes between 100 and 199 percent of FPL, 13.7 percent of children with family incomes between 200 and 399 percent of FPL, and 9.1 percent of children with family incomes of 400 percent of FPL or more.

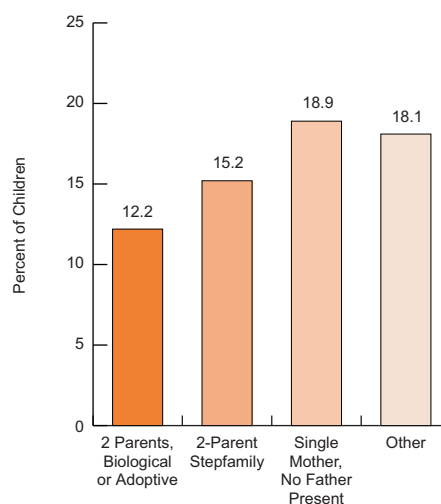
Overweight among children also appears to be related to family structure. Children with two parents—either biological or adoptive—are least likely to be overweight (12.2 percent). Among children in two-parent families with at least one step-parent, 15.2 percent are overweight, while the same is true of 18.9 percent of children with a single mother and no father present and 18.1 percent of children with other family structures.

Percent of Children Who Are Overweight, by Family Income



*Federal Poverty Level, equal to \$18,400 for a family of four in 2003.

Percent of Children Who Are Overweight, by Family Structure



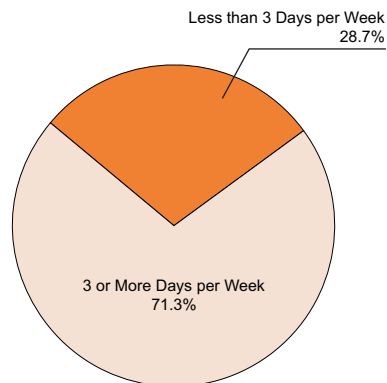


Children's Physical Activity

Parents were asked to report how many days in the week before the survey their children participated in physical activity that lasted at least 20 minutes and caused sweating and hard breathing. Overall, 71.3 percent of 10- to 17-year-olds were reported to exercise 3 or more days per week. Males in this age group are more likely to exercise than their female counterparts (76.8 versus 65.6 percent).

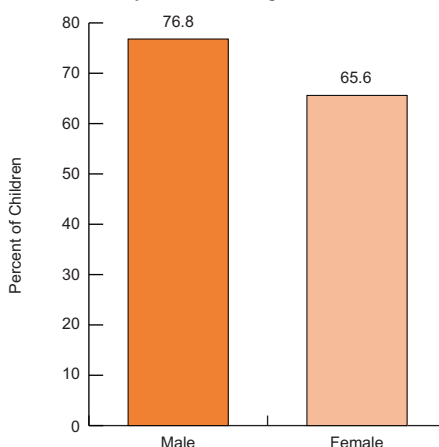
Physical activity decreases with increased age: 78.2 percent of 10- to 11-year-olds were reported by parents to exercise 3 or more days per week, compared with 74.2 percent of 12- to 14-year-olds and 63.3 percent of 15- to 17-year-olds.

Physical Activity* Among Children Aged 10 to 17 Years

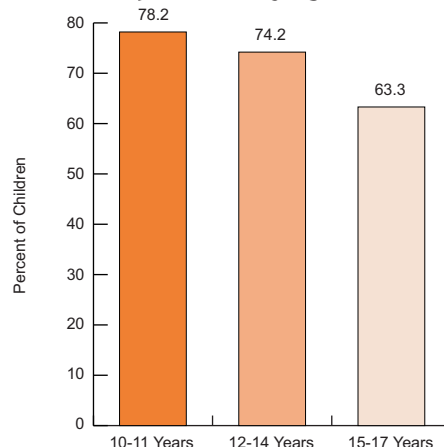


*Activity that lasted at least 20 minutes and caused sweating and hard breathing.

Percent of Children Who Participate in Physical Activity on 3 or More Days per Week, by Sex



Percent of Children Who Participate in Physical Activity on 3 or More Days per Week, by Age

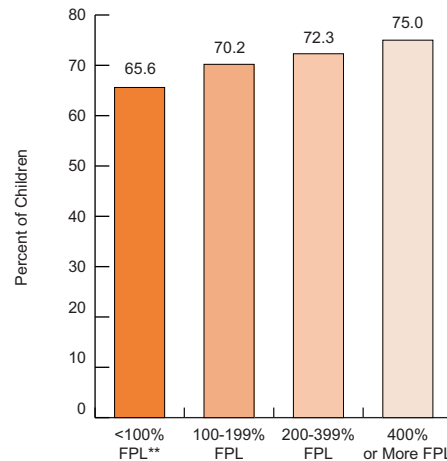




Participation in physical activity on 3 or more days per week increases with family income. Children with family incomes below the Federal poverty level (FPL) are least likely to exercise regularly (65.6 percent) according to parent reporting, compared to 70.2 percent of children with family incomes between 100 and 199 percent of FPL, 72.3 percent of children with family incomes between 200 and 399 percent of FPL, and 75.0 percent of children with family incomes of 400 percent of FPL or more.

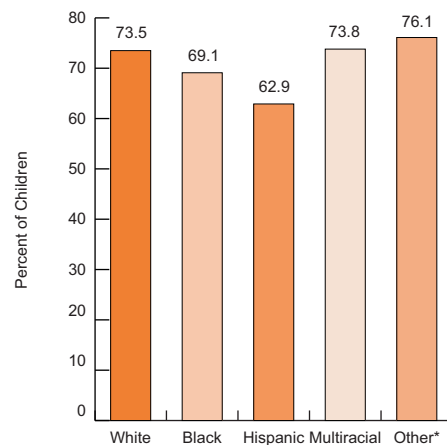
Race and ethnicity also appear to be related to participation in physical activity among 10- to 17-year-olds. White and multiracial children had approximately equal rates of regular physical activity (73.5 and 73.8 percent, respectively) according to parent reporting. Hispanic children were least likely to exercise 3 or more days per week (62.9 percent), followed by Black children (69.1 percent); children of other racial and ethnic origins were most likely to regularly exercise (76.1 percent).

Percent of Children Who Participate in Physical Activity* on 3 or More Days per Week, by Family Income



*Activity that lasted at least 20 minutes and caused sweating and hard breathing.
 **Federal Poverty Level, equal to \$18,400 for a family of four in 2003.

Percent of Children Who Participate in Physical Activity on 3 or More Days per Week, by Race and Ethnicity



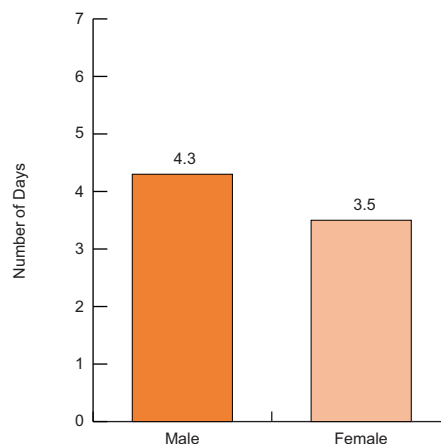
*Includes Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native children.





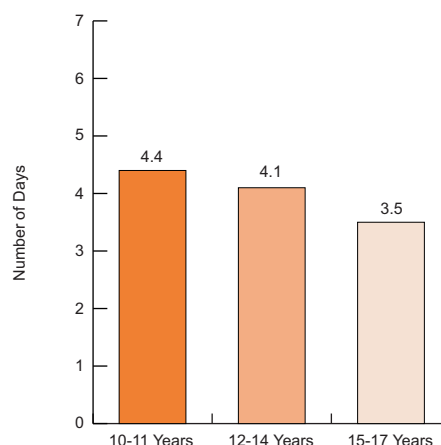
Overall, children aged 10 to 17 years participate in physical activity that lasts at least 20 minutes and causes sweating and hard breathing for an average of 3.9 days per week, as reported by parents. As with the previous measure of physical activity, males exercise a greater mean number of days than females, and younger children exercise a greater mean number of days than older children. The average for males is 4.3 days per week, compared to 3.5 days for females. Children aged 10 to 11 years average 4.4 days, while 12- to 14-year-olds average 4.1 days and 15- to 17-year-olds average 3.5 days per week.

Mean Days of Physical Activity* per Week, by Sex



*Activity that lasted at least 20 minutes and caused sweating and hard breathing.

Mean Days of Physical Activity per Week, by Age



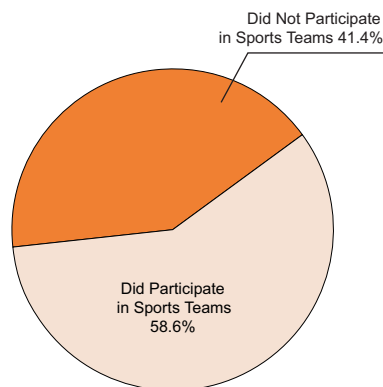
Overweight and Physical Activity > Children's Physical Activity



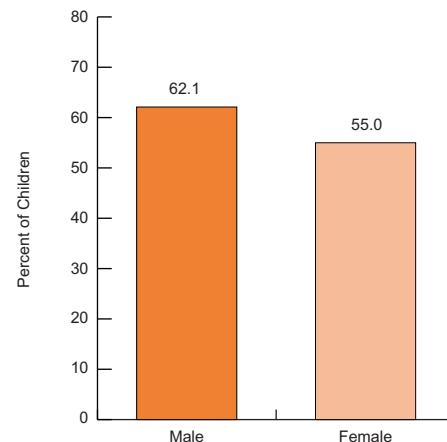
According to parents, over half (58.6 percent) of 10- to 17-year-olds participate in sports teams or take sports lessons. Males are more likely than females to participate in sports (62.1 versus 55.0 percent). Children aged 10 to 11 years and 12 to 14 years have almost equal rates of participation in sports (61.5 and 61.6 percent, respectively), while those aged 15 to 17 years are less likely to participate (53.4 percent).

Participation in sports also varies by type of school attended. Of children in private schools, 74.2 percent participate. The rate of participation among public school children is 57.5 percent, and home-schooled children are least likely to participate with a rate of 45.0 percent.

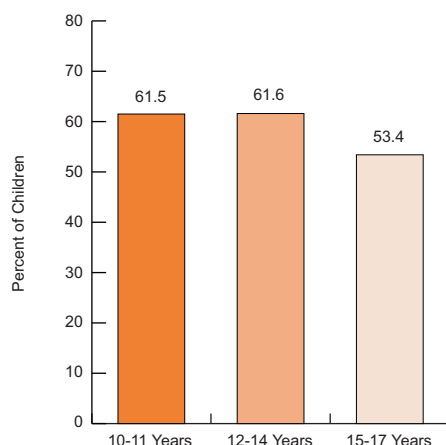
Participation in Sports Teams Among Children



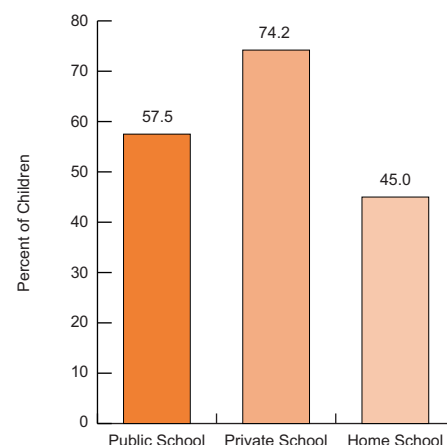
Percent of Children Who Participate in Sports Teams or Sports Lessons, by Sex



Percent of Children Who Participate in Sports Teams or Sports Lessons, by Age

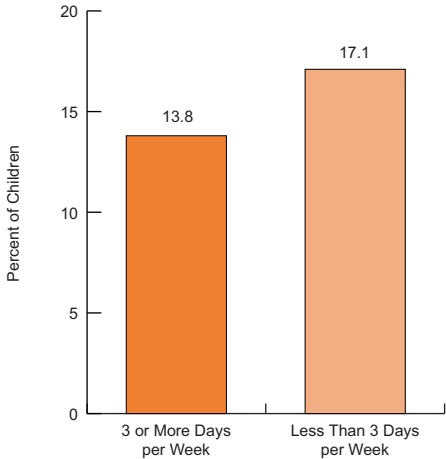


Percent of Children Who Participate in Sports Teams or Sports Lessons, by School Type



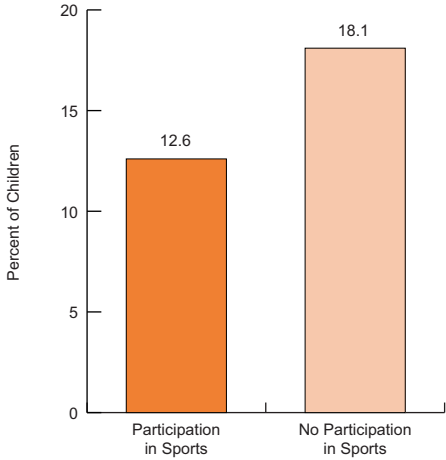


Percent of Children Who Are Overweight, by Participation in Physical Activity*



*Activity that lasted at least 20 minutes and caused sweating and hard breathing.

Percent of Children Who Are Overweight, by Participation in Sports Teams or Sports Lessons



Physical activity and participation in sports appear to be related to overweight in children aged 10 to 17 years. Children who are physically active 3 or more days per week are less likely to be overweight than those who are not, 13.8 and 17.1 percent, respectively.

Of children who participate on a sports team or take sports lessons, 12.6 percent are overweight, compared to 18.1 percent of children who do not participate in sports.





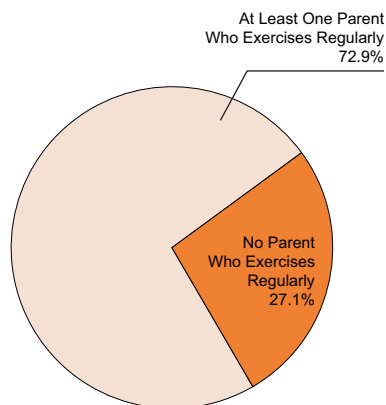
Physical Activity in the Family

According to parents, most 10- to 17-year-old children have at least one parent who exercises regularly. Overall, 72.9 percent of children have at least one parent who regularly exercises or plays sports hard enough to breathe hard, have a fast heart beat, or sweat for 20 minutes or more; the remaining 27.1 percent of children do not have a parent who regularly exercises or plays sports at this level of intensity.

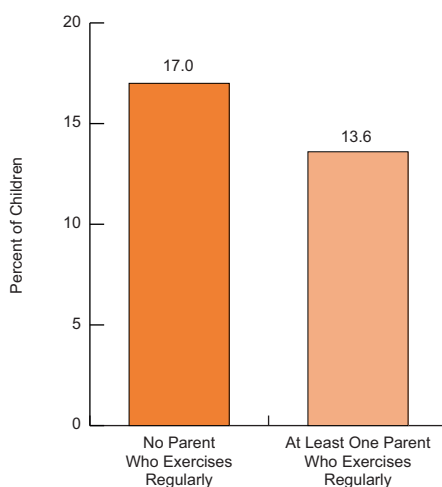
Parental exercise appears to be related to overweight among children. Of all children who do not have a parent who exercises regularly, 17.0 percent are overweight; this is compared to 13.6 percent of children who do have at least one parent who exercises regularly.

As with exercise among children, parental exercise varies by family income. Among children with family incomes under 100 percent of the Federal poverty level (FPL), 56.7 percent have at least one parent who exercises regularly. This rate continues to rise with family income, and among children with family incomes at 400 percent of FPL and above, 83.8 percent have at least one parent who exercises regularly.

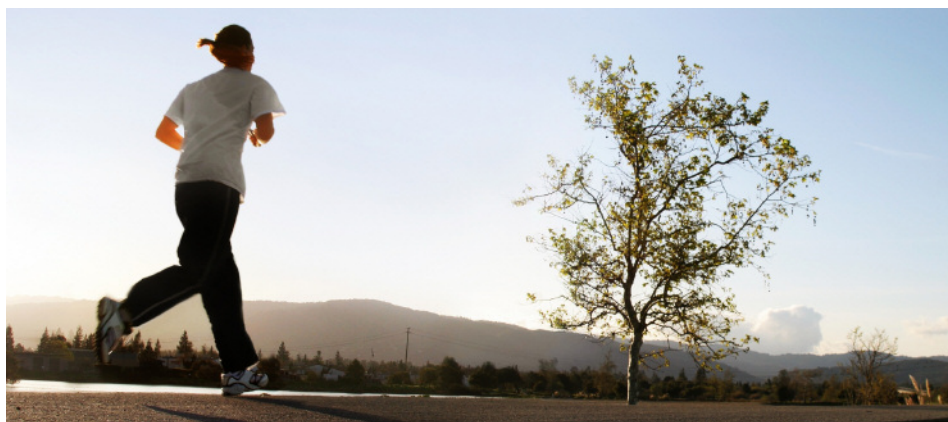
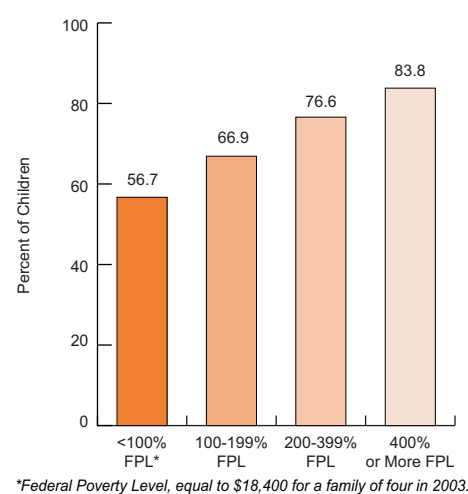
Parental Exercise Among Children



Percent of Children Who Are Overweight, by Parental Exercise



Percent of Children Whose Parents Exercise Regularly, by Family Income



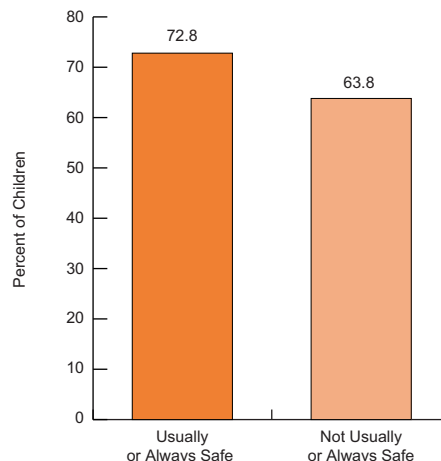


Physical Activity and the Neighborhood

Safety in the neighborhood or community, as defined by parents, appears to be related to physical activity and participation in sports. Among those children living in neighborhoods that are usually or always safe, 72.8 percent exercise on 3 or more days per week; this is compared to 63.8 percent of children living in neighborhoods that are reportedly never or only sometimes safe.

Safety in the neighborhood or community is similarly related to participation in sports among children. Of those children living in neighborhoods that are usually or always safe, 60.9 percent participate in sports teams or take sports lessons; among those children living in neighborhoods that are reportedly never or only sometimes safe, 47.2 percent participate in sports.

Percent of Children Who Participate in Physical Activity on 3 or More Days per Week, by Neighborhood Safety*



*Neighborhood safety is determined by whether the parent feels the child is usually or always safe in that neighborhood.

Percent of Children Who Participate in Sports Teams or Sports Lessons, by Neighborhood Safety

